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Louis S D Rees
Author

THEROIGNE DE MERICOURT;

A Romance,

IN FIVE PARTS,

BY

LOUIS S. D. REES.

PART I.

Philadelphia:
WILLIS P. HAZARD,
178 CHESNUT STREET.

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To Alphonse de Lamartine—

The traveller, poet, orator, historian;—whose holy eloquence in the hour of revolutionary excitement did more for the good of humanity and the honor of his country, than even the varied and beautiful productions of his pen have done for his own literary fame,—this First Part of a Romance, the idea of which was suggested by a perusal of the "Histoire des Girondins," is most respectfully inscribed by his obedient servant and sincere admirer,

The Author.

TO THE PUBLIC.

The favorable opinions expressed by his friends, have emboldened the author of the following lines to submit them to the public eye. He does so with considerable hesitation; not only because he appreciates the difficulties of the task he has undertaken in attempting to write a romance, but also because he is aware that there is a general indisposition on the part of the reading world, to give attention to any thing that comes to it in a metrical form. He invokes, however, a patient perusal and a candid judgment, if not for his own sake, yet at least for the sake of her whom he has chosen to be the subject of his song,—Théroigne de Méricourt, one of the most beautiful, the most gifted, and the most ill-fated of women.

163 *Chesnut Street, March 2nd*, 1855.

THEROIGNE DE MERICOURT.

A ROMANCE.

PART I.

Hark! what cry of wild despair
Rudely wakes the slumbering air?
See! what spectral figure stands;
Stretches forth its withered hands;
Lays its throbbing bosom bare;
Tears its long and streaming hair;
Upward glances to the sky;
Downward turns its flashing eye;
Loudly laughs with causeless glee;
Weeps at fancied misery?

No decent robe of pride and taste
Is girdled round that fragile waist;
No gem-set gold or braided twist
Encompasses that slender wrist;
Nor sparkles on her hand the ring,
Whose magic circle still might bring
Back to the soul all fresh and warm,
Some lost but not forgotten form:—

But squalid raiment, coarse and mean,
Where many a gaping rent is seen,
Too oft to wanton eye betrays
Charms never meant for idle gaze;
While the rough cord and rattling chain,
Her movements' wild excess restrain.

But list! she speaks;—and Oh! such words
Of horror, that (like reeking swords,
Which, stained with gouttes of human gore,
Still gleam as if they asked for more,)
They seem to come from one whose hand
Hath done the deeds a fiend had plann'd.

"Off with his head! Away!" she cries;—
"No mercy here!—the traitor dies!
"Blood, blood we'll have, to quench our thirst
"For vengeance on the race accurst,—
"Those proud aristocrats, whose reign,
"Millions had mourned, but mourned in vain.
"Raise the tall scaffold to the sky!
"'Twere sweet to see our tyrants die.—
"Ha! ha! bethink thee of the day
"When, lured from home and peace away,
"I left—What! shrink ye back, vile race?
"Cowards! away! Give woman place!
"And let her wield the avenging knife!
"And let her head the glorious strife!—
"Oh! spare me, spare me!" yet she cries:
"Not now! not here! before all eyes!

"Bury me in some dungeon deep;
"Or hurl me down the craggy steep;
"Or cast me to the raging flame;
"But do not—Ha! to see my shame
"Thou too hast left thy silent grave!
"Or art thou come thy child to save?
"Scourge me? it cannot, shall not be:—
"See, see! my bonds are burst,—I'm free!"—

Poor maniac wretch! 'tis Death alone
Shall free thee from those walls of stone;
Those iron bars; that clanking chain;
That worse than any real pain;—
Those fancied tortures of the mind,
The direst that afflict mankind.

Alas! can madness thus efface
Each beauteous trait, each winning grace;
And sink the sacred human form
Beneath the level of the worm?
Ah! I have seen the new-born charms
Of infants in their mothers' arms,
Just waking from a sweet repose,
Disfigured by convulsive throes:—
I've seen Consumption's hand of stealth
Plant lilies on the brow of health,
And draw the shadows of the tomb
Athwart youth's bright and sunny bloom:—
I've seen, beneath Contagion's power,
The loveliest form, like some fair flower,

Smitten with such a fearful blight,
That Pity sickened at the sight:—
I've seen the ashes of the dead
Thrown festering from their lowly bed,
And left exposed to common view
As if to show what Death can do:—
But all was mercy, beauty all,
Compared with what men Madness call;—
That makes the intellectual sight
Impervious save to Hell's own light;—
That shuts the intellectual ear
Save to the damnings of despair;—
That prompts the virgin's lip to speak
Words so debased, that to the cheek
Of common wantons there would rush,
While uttering them, the burning blush;—
That sways its sceptre of control
Where tyrants cannot—o'er the soul;—
And makes a thing of human birth
A very demon upon earth.

God! if for records on my page
Of early youth or later age;—
Records of crimes against thy law—
Thy hand the avenging sword must draw;
Oh! let its stroke remorseless fall
On health, wealth, freedom, life;—yea, all:—
Yet, in my sorrow's darkest hour,
Let Reason still retain its power;
Nor quench that last celestial ray,
Till in death's shades I pass away!

But turn we from this dreary sight
To view a scene where all is bright;
Where thoughtless youth and sober age
Alike in rustic sports engage;
And, turning from their toils away,
Join in a general holiday:
While Virtue can without a frown
Upon the merry group look down;
And e'en Religion smiles to see
Their pure unsullied revelry.

There are spots in creation which Nature's own hand
Would seem in her happiest moods to have plann'd;
Or some potent magician, with mystical spell,
To have raised as a home where a Peri might dwell:
So radiantly bright, or so calmly serene;
So free from all shadows to darken the scene;
That 'tis hard to believe the deep wrinkle of care
Can furrow the brows of the favored ones there;
Or the terrible phantoms of sickness and death
Pollute the fair place with their pestilent breath.

Perchance 'tis some mansion of opulent ease
Half hid from the view by embosoming trees;
Placed high on the brow of a verdure-clad hill,
As a monument reared to its architect's skill:
Not vulgarly tricked out, for gaudy display,
With pillars of plaster, and coatings of clay;
But simple yet noble, as best might become,
Not the splendor of state, but the comfort of home.

In front a broad meadow, where browse or recline
The favorite horse, and the well-fatted kine,
The innocent lamb, and the matronly ewe,—
Just enough to give quiet repose to the view:
More near a choice garden, from whose spicy bowers
Exhales the sweet odor of thousands of flowers,
Where, like faithless adorers, the butterfly gay
Just sips of their sweetness, then flutters away.

Perchance 'tis some castle, whose battlements rise
As if conscious of strength, till they threaten the skies;
While its deep-laid foundations, embracing the rock,
Have stood, and shall stand, of long ages the shock.
Around, rugged steeps, which the goat cannot climb,
Stand as bulwarks against the encroachments of Time.
Far below foams a torrent, whose waters now flash
'Neath the blaze of the sun; now mysteriously dash
Through the gloom of ravines, from whence issues alone
The deep roar of its waves, or the rock's hollow groan;
While the landscape beyond wears an aspect so soft,
So unlike the huge relic which towers aloft,
That it seems like an infant laid prostrate in prayer
At the feet of the giant who frowns on it there.

Perchance 'tis some valley where, hid from mankind,
A few tranquil spirits their paradise find;

Who, sick of the world, with its bitter and sweet,
Have sought refuge from all in this welcome retreat.

But all that elsewhere boasts of grandeur or grace,
Met in one to embellish the beautiful place,
Whose innocent revelry gladdens our eye
As we turn with alarm from the maniac's cry.
See the castle, which still, in defiance of Time,
Stands as firm in its age as it stood in its prime;
Though the festival pomp and the feudal array
Which it witnessed of old have long since passed away.
See the mansion, whose lordly possessor combines
The wealth that commands with the taste that refines:—
And there, far below, in that beautiful vale,
See the homes where repose and contentment prevail;
Where no one can boast of broad acres he owns,
And no one unpitied in misery groans;
Where the milk of their flocks, or the fruit of their fields
To each, without luxury, competence yields;
And if there, as elsewhere, bread is purchased by toil,
Yet the labor bestowed on a generous soil
But renders more welcome the calm eventide,
When, sitting at ease by his own fireside,
Or reclining outstretched 'neath the sun's western ray,
With his "gudewife" at hand and his children at play,

The poorest man feels a warm glow at his heart,
Such as wealth with its splendors can never impart;
And looking towards heaven he gratefully sings,
"'Tis the Good God above us who gives these good things."*

It was not in that sea-girt isle,
Where Liberty with radiant smile
Shines equally on all;
While Commerce with a bounteous hand
Spreads plenty o'er the favored land,
Obedient to her call:—

It was not in this western sphere
Where Nature's giant forms appear
In cataract, tree, or plain;
While mighty floods impetuous sweep,
Now broad as seas, and now as deep,
Down to the circling main:—

It was not in that sunny land
Whence Dante's pen and Raphael's hand
Electrified the world;
Whence Rome, the mistress of mankind,
Through every clime, to every wind,
Her conquering flag unfurled:—

It was in thee, thou lovely France,
Land of the festive song and dance,
Foremost on history's page;

* "Deus nobis hæc otia fecit."

Where still new scenes of wonder rise
To take the nations by surprise,
As age succeeds to age!

Oh! who that treads thy princely halls,
And views upon their gorgeous walls
The records of thy fame;
Or sees thy columns, mounting high
And pointing upward to the sky,
Inscribed with many a name:—

Who that recalls the noble men
Potent to wield the sword or pen,
To conquer or to save;
Who hailed thee as their land of birth,
And found in thee their bed of earth,
Their cradle and their grave:—

Who that remembers that thy land
Was rescued once by woman's hand
From fierce invading foes;
And cowering 'neath the hated yoke,
At her command its fetters broke
And in its strength uprose:—

Who that bethinks him of the man
Whose mighty mind alike could span
The little and the great;
Could keep a conquered world in awe,
Construct a road, reform a law,
Or renovate a state:—

Who that to all these marvels turns,
Can wonder at the pride that burns
Within each son of thine,
As, counting o'er thy countless charms,
Thy deeds in arts, thy deeds in arms,
He cries, "This land is mine?"

Nor let me pass unheeded by
That kind unvarying courtesy
Which every stranger meets,
Who moves thy higher walks among,
Or mingles with the meaner throng
That traverses thy streets.

Oh! it hath been my lot to roam
Far from my country and my home
With desolated heart;
And still thy gentle, kindly smile
Could soothe my grief, my cares beguile,
And peace and hope impart.

But wherefore to-day All this festive array,
Wherein rich and poor equally share?
What lends a new grace To the child's merry face,
And smooths the rough forehead of Care?

Why floats o'er the hall And the old castle wall
The banner so gorgeous and bright;
While each cottage is seen Decked with garlands of green,
To betoken its owner's delight?

What wakes the glad notes Whose sweet harmony floats
From yon church o'er the scene far and near?
And why does the song Of the peasant prolong
The sweet sound as it falls on his ear?

Why groans the full board With each luxury stored,
Where the lord and his tenantry join?
And why does the glass So incessantly pass
With its bumpers of generous wine?

Is it Victory's voice Bids the rustics rejoice
O'er their country's success in the field?
Or the last sheaf of corn From the harvesting borne
At the close of a plentiful yield?

No; the vale and hill-top With the ungathered crop
Still shine as with gilding o'erspread;
And the revelry here Is unstained by the tear
Which the widow and orphan have shed.

Little they know who sit, and gaze
With eager eyes upon the blaze
Of glaring light and gaudy hue
With which the drama courts their view:
Who see now lamp-lit suns arise,
Now clouds bedeck the canvas skies;
Now the tall ship, whose outspread sails
Are swelled by artificial gales;

Now the cool grot, or woodland shade,
As if in taunting mockery made
Of that o'ercrowded human mass
Who hail the wonders as they pass:—
Little they know how dark and drear
Viewed from behind those scenes appear,
Where nought but dust and cobwebs hide
The vile reverse of all that pride:

Little they know who raise the shout
That greets the player, strutting out
To act his part with mimic skill
Obedient to another's will,
And weep or laugh, grieve or rejoice
According to the prompter's voice:—
Little that gaping crowd can tell
What real joys his bosom swell;
Or what unfeigned distress and pain
May wring his heart, and fire his brain!

And have not bards in every age
Told us "this life is but a stage;"
And each man, at his best estate,
An actor in the scenes of fate?
Who wears a smile, who drops a tear
Obedient to a heart sincere?
Where is the man that does not throw
A mantle o'er his weal and woe,
And deck him with a borrowed plume
Ere he step forth to rave and fume,

And tread the boards of life's wide stage,
The amusement of a passing age?
And when, despite the busy play,
We steal at intervals away,
And hide us in lone solitudes
Where no unwelcome eye intrudes;
Is it not there, and there alone,
We truly smile, and truly groan?
And when Death lets the curtain fall
On play, and players, scenes, and all,
Do we not then first lay aside
The counterfeiting garb of pride,
And stand before our Maker's eye
In beauty or deformity?
Yes, 'tis an universal truth,—
In hoary age, in sprightly youth;—
Deep sunk in vice, by virtue raised;—
Courted or shunned, reviled or praised;—
Though scanned by many a curious eye,
UNKNOWN WE LIVE, UNKNOWN WE DIE.

Behold yon mansion's noble lord!
With ample wealth his chest is stored;
His barn, his granary abounds
With the rich produce of his grounds;
The scutcheon of his ancient race
No treason stains, no crimes debase;
And he as proudly lifts his head
As any of the ancestral dead.
The world applaud his happy state,
Envy a man so rich and great,

Nor doubt that he, at least, is free
From the sad entail,—misery!

Had not they seen him bow his head
In drooping anguish o'er that bed,
Where, racked with pain and fell disease,
His son, his only son he sees?
Had they not seen him wipe away
With trembling hand the drops that lay
Upon that brow so still and fair,
Like tears which Death himself shed there?
Had they not seen, as, hour by hour,
Faded that beauteous fragile flower,
The father's features gathered gloom
From the dark shadows of the tomb?
And, when the agonising gasp
Told of Death's latest, firmest grasp;
When, not like one who courts repose,
But tossing wild with fearful throes,
And uttering shrieks at each new pang
Whose echoes through the mansion rang,—
When thus, to the worst form of death,
The boy had yielded up his breath,
Had they not seen him torn away,
Still clinging to the lifeless clay;
And heard the accents of despair
Which told his all had perished there?

Yes, the sad story of his woe
Has caused full many a tear to flow;

And gossips love to tell the tale
When winter's evening shades prevail,
And prove an unacknowledged joy
To find that wealth has its alloy,
And e'en the lordly and the great
Must share the universal fate:—
"But time," the unthinking world would say,
"Long time since then has passed away;
"And time can minister relief
"To souls most bowed by weight of grief."
True; the deep wound upon his heart
Did lose its pungency of smart:
True; he could join the manly sport,
Frequent new scenes, appear at court:
Yet, when among gay revellers found,
While glass and goblet passed around,
And the loud laugh and jovial song
Strove which should most the mirth prolong;
Then would there oft unbidden rise
Hot scalding tears and deep-drawn sighs,
As some unlooked for, trivial thing
Waked the vibrations of that string,
Whose deeply melancholy tone
Breathed but one thought,—"My son, my son!"

But away, away with desponding care,
With this pale-faced grief, and wan despair!
Lo, Mercy descends to earth again;
And with her Hope's gay and laughing train!
And see how she bears with encircling arm
A babe whose beauty grim Death might charm!

And again, with that well-remembered joy,
The father embraces an infant boy,
Whose sunny smile, by no shadow crossed,
Can more than replace the idol lost.

Then spread ye the banquet's ample store!
Spread it for rich, and spread it for poor!
Bid the young and old, with merry heart,
Hasten to bear in the feast their part!
Nor fear ye though Midnight stoop to hear
Your song of joy and your hearty cheer.

This day we consecrate to Heaven
The blessing so benignly given.
This day we house him in the ark;
This day we seal him with the mark
Worn by the "sacramental host,"—
The proud world's scorn, the good man's boast!
Well then may heaven itself rejoice!
Well may the earth lift up her voice!
Well may the Church aloud proclaim
"The second birth," "the Christian name."

But see yon modest dwelling, dressed
With care and skill beyond the rest;
As if its inmates strove to show
A more than sympathetic glow
Within their happy bosoms burned,
For blessings which themselves concerned.
Its quiet aspect, placed between
The proudly great and poorly mean,

Tells not indeed of gorgeous wealth,
But of peace, competence, and health.
The close cut hedge, the gay parterre,
No mercenary hand declare.—
The orchard's promising increase,
The dog reclining at his ease,
The bird that struts his life away,
Proud his gay plumage to display;—
All, all proclaim that easy state
Envied alike by small and great,
That golden mediocrity,
From pining as from surfeit free.

Within that home of peace reside
A lover and his happy bride;
So closely knit in love's own bond,
So free from every thought beyond,
That but one spirit seems to dwell
In both their frames, one magic spell
With mystic influence to control
Each thought and feeling of each soul.

Perchance, indeed, to one who knew
To search man's nature through and through,
There might appear upon his side
Too much of that stern manly pride,
That walks the earth with stately tread
And lifts sublime to heaven its head,
As if, in conscience of its worth,
It scorned the meaner things of earth:—
That feels no pity for the price
Which, soon or late, men pay for vice;

That joys, as Mercy doth, to bless,
And weeps at innocent distress;
But cannot, like that angel, stoop
To lift a prostrate sinner up.—

Perchance her soul too feebly hung
Upon his strength; too closely clung
For safety to his sheltering arm,
On danger's most remote alarm.
It seemed as if the self-same blow
That struck at him must lay her low;
As if even God Himself she feared,
Chiefly because he too revered.
Yet blame them not; 'twas but the excess
Of virtue dimmed their loveliness;
And e'en the sun is said to show
Some dark spots 'midst his burning glow.

Not yet twelve months had rolled away
Since dawned the memorable day
That placed the bridegroom by the side
Of his own chosen, cherished bride,
When neighbors crowded round to see
The first sweet smile of infancy,
And on the unconscious lips to press
The gentle kiss of tenderness.

Poor fragile flower! they little knew
Who o'er it bent their earnest view,
What gathering tempests would arise
In after years to cloud its skies;

Till the wild fury of the storm
Burst on its frail and shrinking form.—

'Twas on the day, when first with joy
Yon proud lord had embraced his boy,
That first his humbler tenant prest
An infant daughter to his breast;
And willed that lord that the same hour
Should see each consecrated flower
Transferred from nature's barren waste,
And, by the rite baptismal, placed
Within the Church's hallowed bounds,—
Those fertile, sheltered, happy grounds,—
Where each young tree of Paradise
Blooms ere transplanted to the skies.

Ye who would contemplate a sight
Which angels gaze on with delight,
And more than angels from above
Deign to rejoice in and approve;—
Look on that consecrated place!
Look on that minister of grace!
Look on that pure baptismal stream
All radiant with a kindly beam
From Mercy's own benignant eyes,
As wide she opens Paradise!
Look on those infants, for whose fate
Heaven, Earth, and Hell expectant wait!—
Angels—to guard their course through life,
And shield them 'mid its dreadful strife:

Or waft them swift from earth away
To regions of unclouded day.
Parents—whose every hope, and fear,
And joy, and grief are centred there:
Demons— to blast their opening bloom
With sin's dark stain, and Hell's deep gloom;
To make their ruined souls a curse,
A plague-spot in the universe,
Till God, in mercy to the race,
Bid Death the damning blot efface.

Oh! if we welcome with applause
The man who in a righteous cause
Seizes on sword, and spear, and shield,
And rushes to the battle-field,
Careless though 'mid the heaps of slain
His own unburied corpse remain:—
If with delight we view the maid,
Now first in nuptial garb arrayed,
Who speaks the irrevocable word
That gives her to her bosom's lord:—
Say, shall not equal praise be given
To him who wields the sword of heaven;
And by the sacred sign he bears
Upon his brow true fealty swears
In life, in death, through gain, through loss,
To him who triumphed on the cross?—
Say, shall not equal joys arise
For souls new-wedded to the skies,
Who spotless as the robes they wear,
In virgin innocence appear,

To be presented to their lord,
The Church's husband,—and her God!

But ah! what prescient eye can scan
The distant future of the man,
On whose unconscious baby brow
The sacred drops are falling now?
Shall the wide world resound his fame?
Or echo with his guilt and shame?
Or shall he, like some drifting bark,
Float o'er life's sea, nor leave one mark,
One single furrow on the wave
Betwixt his baptism and his grave?

Perchance that little rosy lip
In after years may fondly sip
The cup of pleasurable sin,
And, with it, drink damnation in.
Perchance that tiny hand we see
Feebly stretched out towards vacancy,
May one day grasp the reeking blade
With human slaughter crimson made,
And fling the devastating brand
O'er many a fair and smiling land.
That voice, now uttering fretful cries,
In burning eloquence may rise
To thrill a nation with its tone,
Or hurl a monarch from his throne:
Or (dreadful thought!) may utter loud,
'Midst impious folly's laughing crowd,

The bold defiance 'gainst High Heaven,
Nor breathe one prayer to be forgiven.
That infant form may rise to wear
A weight of glory even here:—
Amid its generation stand
Diffusing blessings round the land;
Chase, like the glorious orb of day,
The mists of sin and grief away,
And cause the admiring world to see
How bright a Christian's course may be;
By bad men feared, by good men loved,
By conscience and by God approved:—
May, after death, still higher rise,
There, there, where angels walk the skies;
And view with unbeclouded sight
The effulgence of the Eternal Light.

That infant form may prostrate lie
In sloth, in vice, in infamy;
Spread, with its pestilential breath,
That worst of plagues, a moral death;—
Be praised by none, by none be loved,
By conscience hourly be reproved;
Feel in its inmost soul the dread
Of vengeance falling on its head;
And sink at last (how darkly deep!)
Down, down for ever; still to weep,
Long as the weary ages roll,
The ruin of a deathless soul.—

* * * * * * * *

The rites performed, with serious thought imprest,
Sober, not sad, returns each welcome guest
To share the bounties of his generous lord,
And meet around his hospitable board.
All crown the goblet, the sweet nectar quaff,
Sing the glad song, and raise the cheerful laugh;
Then join the dance, and, to the varied sound
Of string and pipe, tread the fantastic round;
Not anxious for display, but only bent
To give expression to their hearts' content;—
And some, 'tis said, whose dancing days were o'er,
On this occasion danced again once more.
Light was each foot, and sparkled every eye,
Swift flew the merry hours unheeded by,
Till, as the village clock, with solemn tone,
Warned that another fleeting day was gone,
Back to the banquet-hall the guests repair,
Once more its hospitalities to share.
The banquet o'er, uprose the man of God,
And spread his suppliant hands to heaven abroad,
And, with a voice of dignity and love,
Invoked on all a blessing from above.

Just then, a stranger through the portal slowly entered,
On whose gaunt form the eyes of each with awe were centered.
In gloomy contrast with this scene of chastened gladness,
Her every look and feature wore a hue of sadness.

The crimson stream of life had lost its power to redden
Her hollow cheek; her eye was lustreless and leaden.
Onward she moved, and seemed it that she little heeded
How each, with look of fear as she advanced, receded.
Onward she moved until she stood beside the father,
The mansion's noble lord, then seemed her soul to gather
New fervency of passion, and new stern decision;
And thus she spake, and, speaking, smiled as in derision:—

"Happy man! While you can,
Revel in your joy;
Still caress And fondly press
Your pretty baby boy!
Wretched man! Could you scan
Dark futurity,
You would say, 'Woe worth the day
Gave that boy to me!'
Love how great! Deadly hate!
Both their forms I see.—
'Spare my life!'—'Nay, whet the knife;
Vengeance calls for thee.'"

Onward she moved, nor stayed until she stood
Beside that other father; while his blood
Grew cold within his veins, and paled his cheek
As waited he the words she yet might speak.

But see how changed a form she bears!
Mark how her eyes are filled with tears!
And list, with what a plaintive moan
She chants these words in softened tone:—

"There was a flower In Beauty's bower,
Lovely in form and hue;
Now dimly seen Through foliage green,
Now hidden from the view.
In evil hour About that flower
A wily serpent coiled,
Whose poisonous breath With taint of death
Its virgin beauties soiled.—

"I saw from far A twinkling star
Beam in the evening sky;
Whose timid light, So meekly bright,
Shrunk from the gazing eye.
There came a cloud With gloom to enshroud
That unobtrusive ray;
And, quenched in night, The modest light
Passed from the scene away.—

"O guard from harms Those opening charms,
So transient and so dear;
For storms will rise In summer skies,
And there's a serpent near!"—

Onward she moved to the grave priest; and, by him standing,
Said, with an attitude and tone of voice commanding,

As felt she that prophetic words to her were given,
And that she too could claim authority from heaven:—

"Stretched there a sea All brilliantly;
I stood upon its shore;
And as I stood It turned to blood,
Deep crimson human gore.

"And forth there came, In lurid flame,
The hideous form of DEATH;
With visage thin, And ghastly grin,
And hot devouring breath.

"Then spake the Dead These words of dread
In deep sepulchral tone;—
'The hour is come, The hour of doom,
The hour that's all mine own.

"'A feast I'll have In the silent grave,
Such as the world ne'er saw;
And the rich and great In the Church and State
To my slaughterhouse I'll draw.

"'See my table spread With the mighty dead,
And with young and lusty forms!
And a crowned king Shall his carcass bring
To the banquet of the worms.

"'See a woman's hand Uplift the brand
That kindles the murderous strife!

And, lo, at her word They unsheathe the sword,
And whet the avenging knife!

"'But, ha! she shrinks, And her right arm sinks
As though paralysed its force:—
Who, who could scare Thee, my priestess fair,
And arrest thy glorious course?

"'Seize the recreant! bind her fast!
Shroud her soul in midnight gloom!
Then, when twice ten years are passed,
Fling her to the tomb!'—

"With the lightning's flash, And the thunder's crash,
And the ravings of the storm,
And a demon's howl, And a darkening scowl,
Down went that spectral form."—

* * * * * * * *

The feast is o'er; the lights are out;
Hushed is the laugh, the song, the shout;
The guests are parted, none remain
Of all that gay, that startled train:—
But few, I ween, their eyes could close
That night in undisturbed repose:
For if, outworn, awhile they slept,
Soon dreadful visions o'er them crept,
Of grinning skulls, and seas of blood,
And spectral forms that round them stood;

And starting from their sleep, they cry,
"Save us, O God, the doom is nigh!"

And there were two, who vainly strove
The burden from their hearts to move
Of half allowed, half scouted dread,
There lying like a weight of lead.
And chief the man who fondly prest
The infant Théroigne to his breast,
And heard, still echoing to his thought,
These words with fear and caution fraught;—

"O guard from harms Those opening charms,
So transient and so dear;
For storms will rise In summer skies,
And there's a serpent near!"

END OF PART I.

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